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Department of Government Efficiency

The **Department of Government Efficiency** (**DOGE**),[note 1] officially the **U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization**, is an initiative of the second Trump administration led by Elon Musk.[2] Despite its name, DOGE is not a Cabinet-level department of the United States government, but a temporary contracted government organization under the United States DOGE Service, formerly known as the United States Digital Service.[3][4] Its purpose is to carry out Trump's agenda of federal spending cuts and deregulation, and, according to the order that established it, to "modernize federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity".[2][5][4] DOGE is scheduled to end on July 4, 2026.[6]

Its creation and subsequent actions have been the subject of significant controversy, including protests and ongoing lawsuits. DOGE's actions of dissolving agencies and seizure of congressionally authorized funds have been described as violating Article 1 of the United States Constitution and creating a potential "constitutional crisis". Some Democratic Party members criticized DOGE's actions, stating that the organization does not have the authority for its actions, calling their actions a "takeover", "freeze", or "coup".[7][8][9] The White House and the Republican Party defended DOGE and Musk, stating they were in full compliance with federal law.[10]

Neither DOGE nor Trump has constitutional authority to cut spending, but they can make recommendations for cuts to Congress, which holds the power of the purse.[11][12][13] Twenty-four days after DOGE began, *The New York Times* reported Trump had claimed he and Musk had found "billions and billions of dollars" in corrupt spending, though they did not provide evidence.[14] Musk asserts all DOGE actions are "maximally transparent", though its website is

U.S. DOGE Service Temporary Organization

Logo as of January 2025

The Eisenhower Executive Office Building, where the DOGE office is located

Temporary organization overview	
Formed	January 20, 2025
Jurisdiction	U.S. federal government
Headquarters	Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C., U.S.
Annual budget	$14.4 million as of February 12, 2025; up from $6.75 million at inception[1]
Temporary organization executive	Elon Musk
Parent agency	United States DOGE Service
Website	doge.gov (http://doge.gov)

minimal; Trump granted DOGE an exemption from public disclosure of its activities.[15][16][17] Musk's companies have extraordinary influence in the federal government and have clashed with various regulators.[18]

History

Conception

DOGE has been linked to Trump's campaign promises to reduce federal spending, the size and influence of the federal government, and the size of the federal fiscal deficit.[20][21] The concept of DOGE emerged in a discussion between Elon Musk and Donald Trump, where Musk floated the idea of a department for streamlining government efficiency. In August 2024, Trump said at a campaign event that, if he were elected, he would be open to giving Musk an advisory role.[22] In response, Musk wrote a post on X saying "I am willing to serve", along with an AI-created image of him standing in front of a lectern marked "Department of Government Efficiency".[23] The organization's acronym, DOGE, has been described as referring to Dogecoin, a meme coin that Musk promotes,[24] and, in turn, to Kabosu, a Shiba Inu dog who achieved internet fame as a meme.[25] The DOGE website's official launch prominently featured the Dogecoin logo, which shows Kabosu.[26]

Elon Musk (left) has been appointed by Donald Trump (right) to head DOGE.[19]

Musk was the largest donor in the 2024 United States presidential election spending over US$290 million in support of Trump and other Republicans, primarily in the final five weeks of the campaign.[27]

Musk suggested that the organization could help to cut the U.S. federal budget by up to $2 trillion by reducing waste, abolishing redundant agencies, and downsizing the federal workforce. Vivek Ramaswamy had also stated that DOGE may eliminate entire federal agencies and reduce the number of federal employees by as much as 75%.[28][29] DOGE may attempt to do this through re-implementing Schedule F, by which those in certain policy influencing positions are made easier to lay off.[30] Musk has also proposed consolidating the number of federal agencies from more than 400 to fewer than 100.[31] He has described deregulation as the only path to the SpaceX Mars colonization program and promised he will "get the government off people's back and out of their pocket".[32] *The New York Times* reported in November 2024 that the organization is similar to attempts before it, including president Theodore Roosevelt's Keep Commission, Ronald Reagan's Grace Commission headed by J. Peter Grace, and vice president Al Gore's National Partnership for Reinventing Government.[33]

In October 2024, at a Trump campaign rally in Madison Square Garden, Musk stated that he believed DOGE could reduce federal government spending by $2 trillion,[34] a figure higher than the federal government's total discretionary spending in 2023.[35][36][37] After the election, Musk said $2 trillion

would be a best-case scenario, but he had a "good shot" at cutting $1 trillion.[38] Musk has not specified whether these savings would be made over a single year or a longer period; federal budget experts generally assess fiscal matters over a 10-year budget window.[39][40]

Planning and member acquisition

In November 2024, Musk suggested that former U.S. representative and two-time Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul could work with DOGE.[41][42]

On January 19, 2025, CBS News reported Ramaswamy was expected to step away from DOGE to instead run for the governorship of Ohio. CBS also reported there had been internal friction between Ramaswamy and Musk, with Musk's supporters reportedly "privately undercutting" Ramaswamy and encouraging him to depart from DOGE over his alleged lack of engagement with the project.[43][44] On January 20, following the second presidential inauguration of Trump, the White House clarified that Ramaswamy would not be serving in DOGE.[45] On January 27, Ramaswamy said that he had resigned after a "mutual discussion" with Musk. Ramaswamy described his own focus as "a constitutional law, legislative-based approach", in contrast with Musk's "technology approach, which is the future approach".[46] Musk became the sole leader of DOGE, but his official role is not clear.[47]

On January 21, *The New York Times* reported that the executive order establishing DOGE would rename the United States Digital Service to "United States DOGE Service" and create "DOGE teams" embedded within federal agencies consisting of at least four special government employees that would have "full and prompt access to all unclassified agency records, software systems and IT systems" to the "maximum extent consistent with law". Officially, the group's goal is to advance the "president's DOGE agenda" by "modernizing federal technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity". The budget of the service was unknown, and several of the employees were expected to be unpaid volunteers.[2]

Funding

As of February 4, 2025, $6.75 million had been apportioned to DOGE. Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) observed that this was "nearly twice the annual salaries and expenses budget of the White House".[48] By February 12, the budget had more than doubled to $14.4 million.[1]

Congressional caucus

On November 19, 2024, representatives Aaron Bean (R-FL) and Pete Sessions (R-TX) launched the congressional **Delivering Outstanding Government Efficiency Caucus** (DOGE Caucus) to support the DOGE mission.[49]

Plans to create a new congressional subcommittee were announced on November 21 by the House Oversight Committee chairman James Comer (R-KY).[50] This new subcommittee will be called the Delivering on Government Efficiency Subcommittee, will be chaired by representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), and will work closely with DOGE to reduce governmental expenditures.[51][52][53][54] On November 22, senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) was appointed to lead the corresponding Senate DOGE Caucus.[55][56] In December 2024, Ernst proposed a bill dubbed "Drain the Swamp Act", which would require each executive agency to relocate at least 30 percent of employees working at Washington, D.C.,

headquarters to offices located outside of the D.C. metro area; while also restricting the ability to telework.[57][58][59] In December 2024, Rep. Jared Moskowitz (D-FL), the only Democrat to have joined the newly formed DOGE caucus in Congress at the time, proposed reorganizing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by potentially removing agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Secret Service from its jurisdiction. This proposal aimed to reduce the size of the DHS.[60]

In the Senate, Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) was appointed to lead the corresponding Senate DOGE Caucus on November 22. The House counterpart functions as a subcommittee of the House Oversight Committee.[23][61] The caucus led by Republicans is a separate entity from Elon Musk's advisory DOGE department. The caucus is also separate from the DOGE House subcommittee.[62] Several Democrats have expressed support and willingness to work with DOGE, including representatives Moskowitz (D-FL) and Ro Khanna (D-CA),[60] Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY),[60] and Rep. Val Hoyle (D-OR).[62] On December 17, the DOGE caucus held its first meeting, with over 60 members in attendance, according to Bean, which lawmakers described as largely organizational.[63] The attendees included three Democrats – Steven Horsford (D-NV), Hoyle, and Moskowitz.[63] The discussions encouraged lawmakers to think of what kind of DOGE goals would be "worthwhile lifts", "quick wins", "lower priority", and "low-hanging fruit", and a likely "low-hanging fruit" was mentioned as "people going back to work".[63]

By February 5, Rep. Moskowitz stated that he wasn't sure if he would remain in the commission, stating that it was potentially irrelevant and that "I need to see one of my Republican colleagues in the caucus explain the point of the caucus, because it seems that Elon doesn't need them, because it seems what Elon is doing is destroying the separation of powers. And I don't think the DOGE caucus at this moment really has a purpose."[64]

Objectives

The caucus claims to support the Department of Government Efficiency in its mission to dismantle excessive government bureaucracy, reduce unnecessary regulations, cut wasteful expenditures, and restructure federal agencies. This initiative aligns with President-elect Donald Trump's directive to Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, who were appointed to lead the Department of Government Efficiency.[23][55]

The establishment of the DOGE Caucus has garnered attention for its goals of reducing government spending and bureaucracy. While supporters advocate for increased efficiency and fiscal responsibility, critics express skepticism regarding the feasibility of achieving significant budget cuts without affecting essential services. Concerns have also been raised about potential conflicts of interest, given the private sector backgrounds of key figures involved in the Department of Government Efficiency.[65] Several other Democrats have begun offering ideas for DOGE, including Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), who has ideas on cutting agency redundancies, instituting self-populating tax forms, as well as scrapping fossil fuel subsidies.[60] Rep. Greg Landsman (D-OH) has proposed reducing the size of many government forms, such as student financial aid applications and tax return forms, while Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-NY) suggested making it easier to obtain permits for infrastructure and development projects. Further, Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME) has stated that he is working on a bill to "move all the federal agencies out of D.C." and send them to states.[60]

Early developments

In February 2025, *The Washington Post* obtained internal copies of the DOGE's multi-phase plan.[66] The first phase was to attack DEI initiatives. The second phase is to place on leave employees in non-DEI roles from what they deem "corrupted branches" of agencies. The third phase is to initiate large-scale firings. Reuters reported that month that the first phase "appears driven more by an ideological assault on federal agencies long hated by conservatives than a good-faith effort to save taxpayer dollars", citing two veteran Republican budget experts. Nine of the fifteen agencies DOGE had thus far targeted had been identified by Project 2025 for elimination or downsizing.[67] The BBC suggested that Trump's goals are broadly in line with Project 2025's suggestions to implement the unitary executive theory.[68]

During the early weeks of the project, Trump, Musk and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt asserted DOGE had discovered many cases of corruption and fraud, but they produced little to no evidence of it. Among other things, Musk baselessly alleged many bureaucrats had become multi-millionaires while holding their federal positions, that some had taken kickbacks, and that some Social Security recipients were as old as 150. DOGE represented as "fraud" programs that some might consider wasteful, though the programs had been authorized by Congress. They also claimed to have uncovered issues that had actually been identified years earlier. By mid-February, two judges had rebuked the Trump administration for alleging fraud without evidence.[69][70]

Workforce

Musk was given "special government employee" status, a title reserved for advisors to the federal government. It is a temporary position that allows greater access but bypasses some of the disclosure obligations required of full time employees.[71] The position is someone "who works, or is expected to work, for the government for 130 days or less in a 365-day period".[72]

DOGE's offices are located in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building[73] and has about 20 employees there, with other teams embedded in federal agencies.[38] The DOGE team reports to Steve Davis, a longtime Musk advisor and CEO of Musk's the Boring Company, who played a key role in cutting costs at X and SpaceX. *The New York Times* reported Davis "has himself amassed extraordinary power across federal agencies";[19] his role, though, has yet to be formally announced by the White House.[74] Musk himself has been present with his team. In January 2025, *Wired* reported he was sleeping at the Eisenhower Building.[75]

On November 14, 2024, on social media, Musk called for individuals who were interested in working for the organization to send their resumes to DOGE's X account via direct messaging (DM).[76] At the time, only premium X subscribers could do so due to default messaging restrictions, but the account later enabled DMs for all users.[77][78] Musk has said that DOGE "has some of [the] world's best software engineers".[74]

"DOGE Kids"

On February 2, 2025, *Wired* reported the hires included several engineers aged 19–24 with little to no experience in government, including Akash Bobba, Edward Coristine, Luke Farritor, Marko Elez, Gautier "Cole" Killian, Gavin Kliger, and Ethan Shaotran.[79] They and others of the approximately 40 people working for DOGE under Musk have aggressively questioned federal employees, refusing to disclose

their last names, leaving their cameras turned off during video calls,[74] calling federal employees "dinosaurs", and referring to conversations as "one-way interviews"; many of them are working at various agencies and using multiple anonymous email addresses.[80][81] Farritor, for example, has at least three email accounts at various agencies with plans for more.[74] The team has been called "Doge Kids" by some reporters.[82][83]

Luke Farritor is one of the several engineers aged 19–24 with little to no experience in government.

On February 6, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that Marko Elez had resigned from his role "after he was linked to a deleted social-media account that advocated racism and eugenics"[84] — having written that "I would not mind at all if Gaza and Israel were both wiped off the face of the Earth" in June 2024; "Just for the record, I was racist before it was cool" in July; and "You could not pay me to marry outside of my ethnicity" and "Normalize Indian hate" in September.[85][86][87] The following day, Musk polled X users as to whether Elez should be rehired.[88][89] JD Vance called for Elez to be rehired, saying that "I don't think stupid social media activity should ruin a kid's life. We shouldn't reward journalists who try to destroy people. Ever. So I say bring him back."[88][90] Musk then promised to re-hire him.[91]

Edward Coristine, the 19-year-old son of the owner of snack company LesserEvil,[92] had been previously fired from an internship at Arizona-based data-security company Path Network in 2022 for "leaking internal information" to competing businesses. He boasted on Discord, weeks after being fired, about having retained access to the servers.[93][74] In 2021, Coristine launched Tesla.Sexy LLC, a business that manages web domains, some of them registered in Russia.[94] He also collaborated with 'The Com', a social network of hackers associated to cybercriminal activity.[95] According to experts, Coristine's past activities raise security clearance issues.[96]

Gavin Kliger, 25, published a substack article titled "Why DOGE: Why I Gave Up a Seven-Figure Salary to Save America", which was hidden behind a $1,000 per month paywall and had no content.[74] Concerns have been raised about his amplification of extremist viewpoints, including reposting content from white supremacist Nick Fuentes and misogynistic social media influencer Andrew Tate using social media "to call Hillary Clinton a slur, and demand military tribunals and executions of undocumented migrants who commit crimes".[97][98] *Mother Jones* later reported on a deleted substack article written by Kliger which credited Ron Unz with beginning his "political awakening".[99]

Allegations DOGE employee identities are legally protected

Elon Musk has prioritized secrecy regarding DOGE.[19] On February 3, interim United States attorney for the District of Columbia Ed Martin released a statement saying that "certain individuals and/or groups have committed acts that appear to violate the law in targeting DOGE employees" and noted that "prosecutors" were "preparing".[100] After some of those involved in DOGE were identified online, Musk accused those who had posted of breaking the law.[71][74] "Don't mess with DOGE", posted Musk that night on X.[101] Martin sent Musk and his deputy Steve Davis a letter on February 7 saying that based on a referral from Musk he had opened an investigation into government employees Musk accused of stealing property and making threats. Martin wrote, "If people are discovered to have broken the law or

even acted simply unethically, we will investigate them and we will chase them to the end of the Earth to hold them accountable." Martin posted the letter on his personal X account.[102] According to the *New York Times*, Musk was attempting to describe traditional journalism as "doxxing" in order to invalidate the role of the media in government accountability.[103]

After the names of DOGE employees began circulating on Reddit — and some users suggested violence — site administrators posted that Reddit had "seen an increase in content in several communities that violate Reddit Rules. Debate and dissent are welcome on Reddit - threats and doxing are not." The popular subreddit r/WhitePeopleTwitter was subsequently banned for three days, and a small subreddit called r/IsElonDeadYet was permanently removed.[104]

Known DOGE workers

As stated in the executive order, the organization works in small DOGE Teams. Each typically includes one team lead, one engineer, one human resources specialist, and one attorney.[5] Each team coordinates with the head of an agency.

DOGE organization members

	Name	Title/role	Federal agencies	Past employer(s)	Notes	Ref.
1	Jacob Altik	Lawyer	EOP	D.C. Cir., Supreme Court	Clerked for Judge Neomi Rao; scheduled to clerk for Justice Neil Gorsuch	[105][106]
2	Anthony Armstrong	Senior Adviser to the Director	OPM	Morgan Stanley (banker)	Worked on Musk's Twitter purchase	[105]
3	Jehn Balajadia		ED	Boring Company	Assisted Musk for years; close confidant	[105]
4	Alexandra T. Beynon		EOP	Mindbloom (engineer)	Founded by her husband, Mindbloom "offers guided at-home ketamine therapy"	[105][107]
5	Riccardo Biasini	Senior Adviser to the Director	OPM	Boring Company, Tesla	Involved with new government-wide email system at OPM	[105]
6	Brian Bjelde	Senior Adviser	OPM	SpaceX, Twitter	Known as a "top DOGE lieutenant"	[105]
7	Akash Bobba	Senior Adviser to the Director	OPM	Bridgewater Associates (intern), Meta (intern), Palantir (intern)	Has not yet graduated from UC Berkeley	[108][79]
8	James Burnham	General Counsel	EOP	Supreme Court (clerk for Neil Gorsuch), Jones Day (litigation partner), White House	High-ranking Justice Department and White House official from the first Trump administration	[105][106]
9	Nate Cavanaugh		GSA	Brainbase, FlowFi (co-CEO)		[105][109][110]
10	Edward Coristine	Expert; Senior Adviser	DT, OPM, DOS, DHS, FEMA, USAID	LesserEvil; Path Network; Neuralink (intern);	Youngest member; nicknamed "Big Balls"; owner of Tesla.sexy; accused of leaking documents; allegedly associated with	[111][112][113][114][94]

					"The Com", a group of users engaged in criminal activity	
11	Steve Davis	Head of DOGE (*title unknown*)	EOP	Boring Company (CEO)	Longtime Musk confidante	[105][74]
12	Marko Elez		USDT	SpaceX (engineer), Twitter (engineer)	Fired from DOGE for past racist posts; later re-hired	[105]
13	Luke Farritor	Executive Engineer in the Office of the Secretary	HHS, DOS	SpaceX (intern)	Attended the University of Nebraska–Lincoln	[105][111]
14	Joe Gebbia			Airbnb (co-founder)	Board member of Tesla	[115][116]
15	Amy Gleason			US Digital Service		[74]
16	Joshua Gruenbaum	Federal Acquisition Service Commissioner	GSA	KKR & Co.; Moelis & Co.	Restructurings, mergers and acquisitions	[117]
17	Nicole Hollander		GSA	Twitter	Married to Steve Davis; seeking to initiate thousands of lease cancellations on federal buildings.	[118]
18	Stephanie Holmes	Human Resources		Jones Day (lawyer), Oklo (chief people officer)		[105]
19	Gautier "Cole" Killian	Federal Detailee	EPA	Jump Trading (engineer)	Graduated from high school in 2019; attended McGill University in math and computer science.	[119][120][121]
20	Gavin Kliger	Senior Adviser to the Director	CFPB, OPM, USAID, IRS	Databricks, LinkedIn	Attended UC Berkeley, graduating in 2020; problematic tweets and substack post	[121][99]
21	Keenan D. Kmiec[a]	Lawyer	EOP	InterPop, federal circuit court (clerk, Samuel Alito),	Son of former U.S. ambassador Douglas Kmiec	[105][106]

				Supreme Court (clerk, Roberts), Tezos		
22	Tom Krause	Expert	USDT	Citrix Systems (CEO)	Said to have access to payment systems at Treasury	[105][122]
23	Jeremy Lewin		CFPB, GSA	Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP	Studied under Laurence Tribe at Harvard; wrote an op-ed with Tribe arguing for the liquidation of Russia's federal reserves, to be given to Ukraine; his law firm represented Tesla	[123][124]
24	Kendall M. Lindemann		EOP		Associate at Russell Street Ventures, founded by Brad Smith	[105]
25	Russell McGranahan	General Counsel	GSA			[117]
26	Katie Miller	Spokesperson		Mike Pence (press secretary)	Wife of White House deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller	[105][125]
27	Aram Moghaddassi			Neuralink, Twitter		[126]
28	Justin Monroe	Adviser	FBI	SpaceX, US Navy (information warfare officer)	First naval information warfare officer to be commissioned out of the Naval Academy in 2011	[105][127]
29	Elon Musk	Leader of DOGE (*title unknown*)		SpaceX, Tesla, Twitter, xAI, Boring Company, Neuralink		[105]
30	Michael Peters	Public Buildings Service Commissioner	GSA			[117]

31	Nikhil "Nik" Rajpal	Expert	CFPB, NOAA, OPM	Twitter	Studied computer science and history at UC Berkeley	[105][128][129]
32	Adam Ramada		EOP		Investment firm with links to a SpaceX alumnus	[105]
33	Ryan Riedel	Chief Information Officer	DOE	SpaceX (network security engineer)		[105]
34	Rachel Riley	Senior Adviser in the Office of the Secretary	HHS	McKinsey & Company		[105]
35	Michael Russo	Chief Information Officer	SSA	Shift4 Payments (executive and senior adviser)		[105][126]
36	Amanda Scales	Chief of Staff	OPM	Uber (recruiting), xAI (HR)	Attended the University of California, Davis	[105][130]
37	Kyle Schutt	Software engineer	GSA	Revv, WinRed		[105]
38	Ethan Shaotran		GSA		Is a senior at Harvard University; identified as a runner-up at a hackathon held by xAI; received a $100,000 grant from OpenAI to develop an AI scheduling assistant.	[131][132][133][134][121][135]
39	Thomas Shedd	Federal Acquisition Service Deputy Commissioner; Director of Technology Transformation Services	GSA	Tesla (engineer)		[105]
40	Brad Smith			FEMA COVID-19 Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force	Allegedly pushed during the COVID-19 pandemic to adjust a government model in order to produce fake estimates showing lower death rates;	[105][136]

					friend of Jared Kushner	
41	Christopher Stanley	Aide to Musk (*title unknown*)		Twitter	Assisted with the pardons of January 6 rioters	[105]
42	Jordan M. Wick		EOP	Waymo	Graduated from Massachusetts Institute of Technology	[105]
43	Chris Young			PhRMA (senior political official)	Republican political advisor, hired by Musk in 2024	[74][137]

Functions

Despite its name, DOGE is not a federal executive department, which would require an act of Congress to create. Following its announcement but prior to its formal establishment, *Vox* had speculated the body would be "unlikely to have any regulatory teeth on its own, but there's little doubt that it can have influence on the incoming administration and how it will determine its budgets".[138]

doge.gov home page as it appeared in early February 2025

Dismantling bureaucracy

Donald Trump said DOGE would help to "dismantle government bureaucracy, slash excess regulations, cut wasteful expenditures and restructure federal agencies". He also stated that DOGE will work with the Office of Management and Budget to address what he called "massive waste and fraud" in government spending.[139]

On November 27, 2024, Musk proposed eliminating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.[140][141]

On December 12, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the Trump team and officials from DOGE had inquired about abolishing the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). It also reported on several differing plans to combine and restructure the FDIC, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) and Federal Reserve.[142]

Broadcasting its actions

On February 11, 2025, in an Oval Office press conference, Musk claimed that DOGE's actions would be "maximally transparent", and promised to publish them on an official government website.[16] On February 12, the DOGE website went live. The main page provides a Twitter feed, a DOGE handle on X, and most of the data on the website is already public.[143] On February 14, *404 Media* reported that the DOGE website was insecure, seemingly built on Cloudflare pages and that two unauthorized people had posted messages on the website.[144][145] While the savings section said "Receipts coming soon, no later than Valentine's day [emoji]".[146] The promise has since been updated to read "Receipts coming over the weekend!"[147]

On February 12, the website waste.gov, projecting to "track government waste", was shut down when it has been discovered that it was displaying a default WordPress landing page of an imaginary architecture firm that transgressed Trump's executive order because of the word "diverse".[148]

Terminating itself

According to tweets by Musk and Ramaswamy, the ultimate goal of DOGE is to improve government efficiency to the point where DOGE itself is no longer necessary. The organization has a set expiration date of July 4, 2026, the United States Semiquincentennial (250th anniversary), which follows Ramaswamy's idea that most government projects should have clear expiration dates.[149]

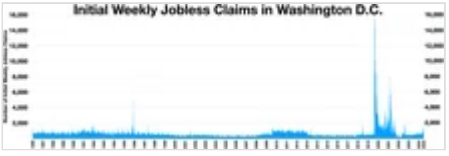
Trump stated that the entity's work will "conclude" no later than July 4, 2026,[150] also coinciding with a proposed "Great American Fair".[151] Trump called the proposed results of DOGE "the perfect gift to America".[152]

Actions within federal government

In late January 2025, *The Washington Post* described Musk's DOGE gaining access to large parts of the federal government, installing surrogates and former employees of Musk's companies as heads at several agencies.[153] *Wired* reported that the top ranks of the human resources-focused United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) had been filled by new hires who had formerly worked for either Elon Musk; Peter Thiel of Palantir Technologies, a United States Department of Defense contractor; Republican politicians or right-wing media outlets, while Musk's allies were installed into the technology-focused General Services Administration and planned massive spending cuts.[154][155]

Bulk firings and mass resignations of US government staff

Federal Government workforce



Initial weekly jobless claims in Washington D.C.

On January 28, 2025, the OPM offered a "deferred resignation" program to federal government employees to announce their resignation by February 6, while stating that employees who resigned would still receive salary and benefits until September 30, 2025.[156] The offer made was similar to Elon Musk's notice to employees after he took control of Twitter.[157][158] By the day before the February 6 deadline, more than 40,000 employees had accepted the offer, well below expectations.[159]

A federal judge, Randolph Daniel Moss, appointed by Barack Obama and overseeing a lawsuit aimed at blocking these "fork in the road" offers, received one such buyout offer email, presumably by mistake.[160] The lawsuit, filed[b] on January 27, 2025, in the federal district court for the District of Columbia by two federal employees against the OPM, alleges that the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, responsible for various federal government personnel operations, failed to conduct a federally mandated assessment to evaluate and mitigate privacy risks associated with the alleged new email system's data collection on federal employees.[161][162]

On February 3, four unions representing 800,000 federal employees filed suit[c] against the Treasury Department, arguing that the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) violated the Administrative Procedure Act by failing to provide a legal basis for the buyout offer.[163] On February 6, Judge George O'Toole Jr., appointed by President Bill Clinton, temporarily blocked Trump and DOGE from engaging in any further action related to the buyout until further arguments were heard.[164] On February 12, Judge O'Toole ruled that the plaintiffs lacked standing to challenge the buyout offer because they were not directly affected.[165]

A *Washington Post* article published in 2014 reported that at an underground limestone mine in Boyers, Pennsylvania, contained the retirement paperwork of federal employees that was processed by hand and stored in cardboard boxes. It takes an average of 61 days to process the retirement of each federal employee.[166] In February 2025, Musk mocked the outdated technology that was being used to process these retirements. A BBC article on Musk's comments made reference to the 2014 *Washington Post* article.[167] Industry analysts view Musk's outcry as a non-issue.[168]

Mass firings of probationary federal employees

On February 13, OPM advised agencies to terminate most of an estimated 200,000 workers who have been hired within the last year and are considered on probation.[169] Following the guidance, layoffs cascaded including 1,000 employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 5,200 employees across U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HSS), and 1,300 employees at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).[169] [170] Included in the probationary cuts were several Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees hired for radar, landing and navigational aid maintenance, and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) employees who are responsible for designing, building, and overseeing the US nuclear weapons stockpile.[171][172]

Alleged classified intelligence data leaked by DOGE

HuffPost reported on February 14 that doge.gov was displaying classified information about the staff of the National Reconnaissance Office, which is responsible for American spy satellites and has a $1.8 billion contract with Musk's SpaceX.[173] This was later confirmed by DOGE on February 17 to have been already public information, previously published by the United States Office of Personnel Management in March 2024.[174]

Disclosure exemptions

The United States Digital Service was previously subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) transparency laws in a government reporting chain through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).[175] As of February 5, 2025, all DOGE staff were ordered to stop posting to Slack, an online chat and collaboration tool that they had been using, as DOGE transitioned from OMB oversight to instead work under the White House Chief of Staff, which Musk and OMB believe would allow them to keep DOGE communications and operations from public oversight.[175]

The New York Times reported on February 10 that the Trump administration had placed DOGE under the purview of the Presidential Records Act, exempting it from disclosure of its documents, communications and records to the public and in most judicial actions until at least 2034.[17]

Government data deleted

The National Security Archive reports that, since Trump's inauguration, 2,000 datasets have disappeared from data.gov, the largest open repository of government data. The topic of climate change was removed from the website of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and others. The website of Department of Homeland Security dropped not only the subject of climate change, but pages on "Artificial Intelligence at DHS", "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)", "Honoring Veterans", "Operation Allies Welcome", and "Securing the Border". White House pages on the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), which coordinate federal environmental and scientific efforts, were removed.[176]

Diversity, equity, and inclusion removal

An internal Department of Government Efficiency report obtained by the *Washington Post* outlined a three phrase process by which DOGE would lead a purge of diversity, equity, and inclusion from the federal government.

- In Phase One, which took place on January 20, 2025, all DEI related executive orders and initiatives would be rescinded, offices at various federal organizations that served a DEI role would be dissolved and their employees terminated, federal websites would remove all DEI-related material from their websites, and DEI-related contracts would be terminated.
- In Phase Two, which is slated to last from January 21 to February 19, the government would begin purging employees that did not work in a DEI-related role, but who had taken part in DEI in some way that made them "corrupted".
- In Phase Three, scheduled for February 20 to July 19, the DOGE begins to commit mass-scale firings of any employee in any office or part of the federal government which did not take part in any DEI offices or initiatives, but who were nonetheless determined through unknown criteria to be "DEI-related".[177]

Agencies affected

Agency for International Development (USAID)

Musk has been sharply critical of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), characterizing it as a "criminal organization", a "viper's nest of radical-left marxists who hate America", and "evil".[178] On February 1, members of DOGE gained access to classified information of USAID without sufficient security clearances.[179] On February 2, *Wired* reported that DOGE personnel attempted to improperly access classified information and security systems at the USAID, but were thwarted by USAID security officials;[121] those officials were subsequently put on leave.[180] The group moved to dismantle USAID by taking the USAID website and X account offline, firing staff, and stopping overseas work.[181] Secretary of State Marco Rubio declared himself acting administrator of the agency, although it has been an independent body for sixty years.[182]

On February 3, Musk said of USAID: "We're shutting it down", with Musk saying Trump "agreed"; an email from special adviser Gavin Kliger to USAID staff instructed staff to keep away from USAID headquarters while hundreds of staff lost access to USAID computer systems.[182][183][184] As an ex-USAID worked describes: "In a matter of hours DOGE shut down our websites, took over email handles, and summarily removed the system access of hundreds of gainfully employed public servants."[185]

On February 5, Musk falsely alleged USAID had given *Politico* and the Associated Press millions of dollars. The figures given were actually for common subscriptions across the entire government; the actual amount USAID alone had spent on Politico subscriptions was $44K.[186] White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said, "The DOGE team is working on canceling those payments now."[187]

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The Washington Post reported on February 5 that DOGE had sought access to data at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),[188] and that DOGE had gained access to key payment and contracting systems at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).[189] CMS officials as of February 6 declined to reveal to what medical and financial records of Americans that Musk had gained access.[190]

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Newly confirmed USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins revealed that DOGE has been at the agency for "a few weeks", welcomed their efforts, and expected full compliance from USDA teams, while farmers and policymakers raised concerns about the funding freeze.[191] A few farmers expressed their anger on TikTok, one of them worrying about losing his farm. [192]

Department of Energy (DOE)

United States Department of Energy (DOE) secretary Chris Wright, against guidance of the DOE's General Counsel and chief information officers, allowed Luke Farritor of DOGE to access DOE computer networks.[193] CNN quoted DOE staff in the general counsel and chief information offices as calling Farritor's access a "bad idea", and that "He's not cleared to be in DOE, on our systems."[193]

Luke Farritor of DOGE was given access to computer systems of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the department responsible for the security and protection of American nuclear technologies and nuclear weapons, by United States Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Chris Wright, against guidance of the DOE's general counsel and chief information offices.[193] On February 13, hundreds of NNSA employees were abruptly fired; the agency sought to rehire the workers the next day. An Energy Department spokesperson said fewer than 50 were fired.[194][195]

Department of Health and Human Services

DOGE gained access to financial systems at the Department of Health and Human Services as well as extremely restricted medical data related to most Americans in heavily access-controlled systems such as the Healthcare Integrated General Ledger Accounting System (HIGLAS).[188] HIGLAS is described by the *Washington Post* as "a vast database that touches nearly every corner of American health care", and that restricted staff with access undergo mandatory specialized training for privacy protections under the Federal law Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).[188] The *Washington Post* noted it was unknown if DOGE operatives were HIPAA compliant under federal law.[188]

Department of the Treasury (USDT)

On January 31, multiple sources reported that David Lebryk, a top Treasury Department career civil servant, was pushed out after he refused to grant DOGE access to a system that disburses over $5 trillion in payments annually, including Social Security, government paychecks and contractor payments. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent granted DOGE access to the system later that day.[196][197][198] *The New York Times* described it as a possible attempt by Trump to "unilaterally restrict disbursement of money approved for specific purposes by Congress" following his earlier funding freeze.[199][19]

The *Financial Times* reported on February 2 that Musk responded to an X post by former Trump national security advisor Michael Flynn, who posted a spreadsheet image purportedly showing federal grant payments to Global Refuge, a faith-based charity that provides services to legal migrants. Without citing evidence, Flynn asserted there was a money laundering operation involved, and that there were many other organizations "cashing in on our hard-earned money".[200] Musk replied that DOGE "is rapidly shutting down these illegal payments".[201] He later asserted that "career Treasury officials are breaking the law every hour of every day by approving payments that are fraudulent or do not match the funding laws passed by Congress".[202]

On February 4, a Treasury Department official wrote to federal lawmakers that a DOGE agent, Tom Krause (who is also CEO of Citrix Systems) was restricted to "read-only" access to the Treasury payments system, preventing "payments for obligations such as Social Security and Medicare to be delayed or re-routed", though *Wired* reported that another member of Musk's team, Marko Elez, had acquired unrestricted access to some Treasury systems, and had been making "extensive changes" to the codebase of the payments system, with limited supervision. Democratic senator Ron Wyden, ranking member of the finance committee to whom the letter was sent, said it "reeks of a cover-up".[203][204][205][206] Senior Treasury officials stated in February 11 federal court filings that the department had "mistakenly" and "briefly" granted Elez "read-write" access enabling him to alter the system;[207] the Trump administration said in its court filings that an internal investigation had showed Elez did not take unauthorized actions despite being able.[208]

Radio France Internationale wrote about DOGE's group entry into the Federal government:

> One of them now has direct access to the US Treasury computer system responsible for virtually all government payments. That is, taxpayers' tax returns, civil servants' salaries. That's billions of dollars that this young engineer can now manage, under the sole supervision of Elon Musk.[209]

On February 5, NBC News reported that attorneys for the Justice Department had agreed to temporarily restrict staffers associated with DOGE from accessing information with the Treasury Department. This change came after a lawsuit was filed by a group of union members and retirees against the Treasury Department.[210] This left Elez and Krause in place, but with a restriction not to disclose information to anyone outside the Treasury. Elez resigned on February 6 after *The Wall Street Journal* reported on deleted social media posts where he explicitly identified himself as a racist and advocated for eugenics and against inter-ethnic marriage.[86]

A coalition of nineteen states, mostly Democratic-led, filed suit in a Manhattan federal court on February 7 seeking to stop DOGE from accessing the payments system.[211] Hours later, a federal judge issued a preliminary injunction prohibiting DOGE from accessing data on the payment system and ordered any

data downloaded by unauthorized people since January 20 to be destroyed. The judge scheduled a hearing for February 14.[212]

Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA)

On February 5, 2025, it was disclosed the DOGE operatives had accessed computer databases and medical records at the Department of Veterans Affairs, with internal VA reports that DOGE was "data mining" disability compensation and benefits of United States Armed Forces military veterans.[213] In the wake of the 2025 Potomac River mid-air collision, United States secretary of transportation Sean Duffy announced on February 5 that DOGE would intervene with the Federal Aviation Administration to "upgrade our aviation system".[214] Elon Musk directly expanded on this, claiming support of President Trump to "make rapid safety upgrades to the air traffic control system".[214] Former secretary of state Hillary Clinton was critical of DOGE's FAA safety involvement, noting that many DOGE staff were not old enough to rent a car in the United States.[214]

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

On February 11, Musk incited Republican outrage by posting on X about Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding of migrant shelter hotels in New York City. He said DOGE had discovered the funding, and falsely asserted that the funds were intended for disaster relief but had been illegally redirected to house migrants in "luxury hotels". The funds had been appropriated by Congress in 2024 under FEMA's "Shelter and Services Program" created by Congress in 2023, and they are separate from disaster relief funds.[215][216][217]

Musk's false allegation led the Department of Homeland Security to fire four FEMA employees that day, including the CFO, alleging they were "deep state activists". The next day, homeland security secretary Kristi Noem said she had "clawed back the full payment that FEMA deep state activists unilaterally gave to NYC migrant hotels". The city comptroller confirmed that $80 million had been withdrawn from the city's bank account.[215][216][217]

General Service Administration (GSA)

At the end of January, Musk's group took over the General Services Administration (GSA), which manages federal real estate and technology. *Wired* magazine reported "an effort to use IT credentials from the Executive Office of the President to access GSA laptops and internal GSA infrastructure".[218] Workers at GSA's Technology Transformation Services (TTS) were summoned to meetings with young, inexperienced engineers who recently worked at Musk's companies.[121] In the meetings, the TTS employees were required to present and defend code they had written. Some of the interviewers did not have government email addresses and refused to give their names.[219] A Musk employee, Thomas Shedd, was appointed to lead TTS. In a TTS all-hands meeting on February 3, Shedd announced that GSA would now operate "like a startup software company", switching to an "AI-first strategy" including writing software with "AI coding agents".[220]

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

On February 13, Sen. Ron Wyden announced that DOGE was at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); an email was sent to the agency beforehand, asking officers to identify all "non-essential" contracts for termination.[221] CNN reports that Gavin Kliger visited the agency and made a series of requests.[222]

Sources say that they included enforcement, personnel footprint, and extensive system access.[223] Earlier, Musk claimed to have "deleted" the group behind the Direct File pilot, whereas the page to file tax returns is still online and operational.[224]

By February 16, DOGE was seeking access to a highly sensitive and tightly controlled IRS system containing taxpayer information. Kliger would be named a senior advisor to the acting IRS commissioner.[225][226][227]

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

404 Media reported that, at an all-hands meeting of all National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) employees on February 4, Deputy Director Jay Boskano stated that the agency had not received "any requests" from DOGE, that DOGE is not currently "looking to gain access" to National Archives systems, and stated there may be "unique opportunities to work with DOGE" to benefit the National Archives in the future.[228]

National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

On February 2, 2025, Musk criticized the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) as "rife with corruption", guilty of "crimes", an "evil organization needs to be dissolved",[229] and "a scam".[230] On February 12, DOGE cut funding to the NED by blocking disbursement from the Department of Treasury, causing significant disruptions to the organization.[229][230][231] The same day, the NED informed the organizations it funds that it would suspend payments immediately. Additionally, organizations supported by NED started laying off staff and cutting expenditures.[229][231]

The Free Press believes that dismantling the NED would symbolise a momentous change in US foreign policy, undermining the idea that democratic ideals foster US global strength and influence, and that the Trump administration therefore no longer believes that promoting democracy in the world is in the national interest.[232]

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

ABC News reported on February 6 that DOGE operatives had gained access to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) computer systems. Staff from the NOAA Information Technology group and the Department of Commerce attempted to keep the operatives from the systems according to security protocols, but the operatives defied authorized security staff and forcefully entered the facilities.[233] Two Democratic congress members characterized DOGE's presence in NOAA systems as "hackers". NOAA staff noted that the actions of the operatives could directly cause risk to human life by hindering NOAA and National Weather Service operations.[234][233] ABC also reported that operatives were also looking for anything connected to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on bulletin boards and were inspecting bathroom signs to ensure compliance with Trump's executive orders.[234]

On February 12, *Grist* reported that the Trump administration started to shrink the Environment Protection Agency (EPA),[235] nearly 170 employees at the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights were placed on paid administrative leave.[236]

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Musk's team seized control of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on January 20.[237] They moved sofa beds into the fifth-floor director's office of the agency's headquarters. Musk's aides locked OPM workers out of computer systems which contain personally identifying information of millions of federal employees.[237] After the takeover of OPM, federal employees across the country received emails asking them to turn in colleagues working on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) initiatives to OPM via a "DEIAtruth" email address.[238] On February 4, two anonymous federal employees filed suit in federal court alleging the DOGE team had unlawfully installed a private server on the OPM network, seeking a restraining order to have it removed.[239]

Reception

Support

An infographic on outlays and revenues in the 2023 US federal budget

In September 2024, Jamie Dimon, the CEO of JPMorgan Chase, the largest American bank, stated that he supported the idea of creating DOGE to improve government competency.[240] In November 2024, Brian Armstrong, the CEO of Coinbase, spoke in support of the idea.[241]

Javier Milei, the president of Argentina, stated that, prior to the official announcement of the creation of DOGE, Musk had called Federico Sturzenegger, Argentina's minister of deregulation and transformation of the state, to discuss imitating his ministry's model in the United States.[242]

On January 10, 2025, 26 Republican state governors wrote a joint letter to leaders of Congress expressing, "overwhelming support for President Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)". The governors also stated that they are committed to "stand ready to help DOGE—and Congress—be successful".[243][244]

In December 2024, Senator Bernie Sanders supported plans by DOGE to cut defense spending,[245][246] and Democratic congressman Ro Khanna indicated that he would be open to working with DOGE to reduce defense spending.[245] By February 6, *Punchbowl News* reported that Khanna and other "DOGE-curious" Democrats had largely soured on and distanced themselves from the commission after seeing how it was being conducted. Khanna stated that he was "appalled by the unconstitutional efforts to block funding appropriated and authorized by Congress" and that he relayed those concerns to Musk.[64] On February 12, 2025, former Democratic congressman Dean Phillips said in an interview with CNN's Laura Coates that "Democrats are wrong to be attacking Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), arguing the American people are broadly supportive of the billionaire's goals to cut waste, fraud and abuse in government — even if some of his tactics have raised legal concerns." Phillips also said that he thinks "Democrats should join the club and then have more credibility to actually raise the alarm about constitutional issues. Right now, it's 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf'."[247][248]

When questioned about Musk's abilities and powers within the government, Trump indicated in February 2024 that Musk would only act when directed with approval from the White House.[71]

Criticisms

In November 2024, *Politico* reported on growing concern from the tech world and several policy experts that the project was over-promising or could potentially tear down "much of the essential infrastructure that ushers along American innovation". Former US deputy chief technology officer Jennifer Pahlka stated that while civil service reform was needed, mass firings was the wrong answer.[249] Senior fellow Brian Riedl at the Manhattan Institute said that DOGE's plan to fire 25% of the federal workforce would reduce only 1% of federal funding and require the hiring of contractors to fulfill the difference. *The Washington Post* cited critics who stated balancing the budget would require higher taxes or cuts to Medicare or Social Security, and DOGE's proposal to slash federal programs that Congress funds but whose authority had lapsed would cut "veterans' health care, initiatives at the State and Justice departments and NASA, and multiple major antipoverty programs". The *Post* also cited budget experts who said Musk and Ramaswamy's plan "demonstrates the pair's misunderstanding of how the government works".[250]

DOGE has been seen as potentially redundant to the Government Accountability Office.[251]

Unconstitutionality

Democratic representative Zoe Lofgren (CA-18) has criticized DOGE, calling it "unconstitutional and illegal" in relation to its proposals regarding the impoundment of appropriated funds by Congress.[252]

Coup

The "freeze of government function" was described as a coup d'état by Seth Masket, a professor of political science at the University of Denver, because "Musk is a private citizen taking control of established government offices." He notes that Musk has no role in government and questions the validity of the Department of Government Efficiency, which is not a federal executive department, assuming power over established government agencies.[253] Author Jeet Heer argued in *The Nation* that the actions of DOGE were a "time-honored revolutionary tactic of developing dual power in order to seize control" and constituted a coup.[254] Paul Krugman, an economist and columnist, stated on February 3 that the actions of DOGE might have as of that date constituted "what amounts to a 21st-century coup", and that he would update his opinion later.[255] *The Guardian* stated that it agreed with Krugman.[256]

According to a Washington Post article, an official stated that Musk has a project of replacing the human workforce with artificial intelligence.[257] Computer scientist Bruce Schneier dismissed Musk's alleged project as "techno-fascism by chatbot".[257]

Unaccountability

Don Moynihan, a professor of public policy at the University of Michigan, called Musk and DOGE's actions "concerning" and "unprecedented". Moynihan worries that Musk and his group, not really public officials, had been able to access sensitive government data, and that Congress had very little ability to monitor and intervene. He also added that "Musk's access to Treasury payment systems could give him undue influence over the federal budget at a time when there is a looming debt-ceiling crisis."[258]

During a news conference at the Capitol on February 3, 2025, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), the vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, stated that Musk and his team were breaking the law. Murray stated that Musk was an "unelected, unaccountable billionaire with expansive conflicts of

interest, deep ties to China" and accused him of hijacking the nation's financial systems and its ability to pay.[71] Questions have been raised whether Musk's and Ramaswamy's companies being contractors to the federal government causes a conflict of interest with their proposed work in DOGE.[259][260][261][262] White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in February 2025 that Musk would determine if his DOGE work presented a conflict of interest.[263] Journalist Malika Khurana lists 11 agencies impacted by DOGE with federal investigations or regulatory battles with Elon Musk's businesses.[264]

Conflict of interest

Representative Greg Landsman described the commission as "a way for the wealthiest person alive, who gets billions in federal money, to hack the federal government data and payment system at the expense of the American people".[64] During a February 11 press conference featuring Musk and Trump in the Oval Office, Musk responded to a question about his potential conflict of interest by claiming that "all his team's efforts were being made public on DOGE's social media accounts and website."[265] CNN host Anderson Cooper noted that: Musk has shown opposition to transparency by claiming that reporters investigating Musk's DOGE workers were committing crimes; that Musk himself has not made his conflict-of-interest forms public, and the White House says he won't have to; and that the statements issued on the DOGE X social media account are no more than "press releases".[266] Later that same day, Trump fired USAID Inspector General Paul K. Martin, one day after Martin had issued a report finding that $489 million in food was at risk of spoilage because of the Trump administration's efforts to shutter that agency.[267]

Economic fragility

Columbia University professor Stijn Van Nieuwerburgh argues that the DOGE's fire sale of more than 500 government buildings could crash financial securities linked to commercial mortgages.[268]

Christian Science Monitor reports that contract lawyers are involved after USAID freeze: farmers selling surplus crops worry about future purchases, and business owners who received grants to investe in renewable energy technology and climate-resistant crops are unsure if they will be paid.[269] Brent Swart, president of the Iowa Soybean Association, says that suspending the USDA puts farmers at risk and jeopardizes programs that demonstrated public returns.[270] Newsweek counted many Multiple TikTok accounts posting clips to express their anger or to discuss the link between the USDA freeze and Project 2025.[271]

Unrealism

Douglas Holtz-Eakin of the American Action Forum compared DOGE to the former Grace Commission which had zero of its 150 proposals enacted. According to chief economist Mark Zandi of Moody's, the 30% of the federal budget that is non-discretionary is at the lowest level in modern history as a percentage of GDP, and that even finding $200 billion of savings was highly unlikely. Senior director for federal budget policy Bobby Kogan at the Center for American Progress said that the "threat level for DOGE's recommendations making it through Congress is relatively low",[272] and that $2 trillion in cuts would likely result in 33% cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and every program relating to veterans compensation and healthcare. Maya MacGuineas of the public policy organization Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget has said that $2 trillion in savings is "absolutely doable" over a period of 10 years, but it would be difficult to do in a single year "without compromising some of the fundamental

objectives of the government that are widely agreed upon". Desmond Lachman of the American Enterprise Institute stated that "realistically, there isn't much political willingness to do the tough stuff that [needs] to be done to get the budget under control."[273]

On February 6, *Business Insider* estimated that at its actual pace DOGE would cancel around $67 billion in contracts each year. This corresponds to a 3% of Musk's original $2 trillion goal.[6] After having reviewed official data, *The Economist* discovered that Treasury outflows actually increased since DOGE took over.[274] NPR investigated Musk's claim that DOGE is saving taxpayers billion, but could not trace back the contracts allegedly terminated.[275]

Inefficient culture war

Jessica Riedl, Manhattan Institute senior fellow on budget, tax, and economic policy, found that DOGE sought to satisfy Trump's culturally conservative base rather than targeting the biggest government spending sources. Alex Nowrasteh, vice president for social and economic policies, Cato Institute, echoed the sentiment.[276]

Brain drain

Axios calls the events "Musk's takeover of Washington" and compares them to the events at Twitter, observing concerns about "brain drain" in both cases if highly knowledgeable workers leave.[277] The events were also called a "takeover" by *The Economic Times*.[23] The *Associated Press* reported that Musk had "created an alternative power structure" in the government.[278]

During the House Ways and Means Oversight Subcommittee hearing on Internal Revenue Service modernization, Nina Olson, the director of the Center for Taxpayer Rights, described the deferred resignation offers as "coerced job cuts and firings" causing "a brain drain" at the IRS.[279]

National risk

Richard Fourno, assistant director at UMBC Cybersecurity Institute, finds DOGE's activities, with little oversight over its employees' operational competence, "create conditions that are ideal for cybersecurity or data privacy incidents that affect the entire nation".[280]

Legal challenges and resistance

Legal experts have described much of DOGE's actions as illegal, breaking multiple privacy, security, and congressional laws and regulations. It has been described as taking a "move fast and break things" approach. Legal analysts have alleged breaches of law regarding aspects of the Privacy Act, Internal Revenue Code, and Federal Information Security Modernization Act. Forcing of workers out of their offices, claims of "deleting" agencies and seizure of funds authorized by Congress have been described as breaking Article 1 of the United States Constitution and constituting a potential "constitutional crisis".[7][8][9][281]

Republican members of the United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform blocked an effort by committee Democrats to subpoena Musk on February 5, 2025.[282]

On February 7, the ACLU filed Freedom of Information Act requests with over 40 federal agencies "for any records that reveal whether DOGE or its representatives have sought or obtained access to databases containing personally identifiable information, financial records, healthcare data, or other sensitive government-held records of Americans".[283]

The "We Choose to Fight: Nobody Elected Elon" protest, organized by MoveOn, was held at the Treasury on February 4, 2025.

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Several US Congress members spoke against Musk's role in the government during the "We Choose to Fight: Nobody Elected Elon" protests.

Compensation for access to data

On February 12, 2025, a class action was filed against Elon Musk.[284] In *Gribbon v. Musk* it is claimed that taxpayers, federal employees and those receiving benefits should be compensated for DOGE's access to their personal and financial data. The lawsuit targets Musk, OPM, Department of Treasury and Scott Bessent.[284]

Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) violations

On January 20, the day of Trump's inauguration, *The Washington Post* learned of a pending lawsuit to be launched against DOGE minutes after Trump was to be sworn in, questioning whether DOGE is a presidential advisory commission obeying federal transparency rules about certain practices, such as disclosure and hiring.[44][285] That same day, three more lawsuits were filed against Trump, DOGE, and the Office of Management and Budget, alleging violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which requires that "the advisory committee have a fair balance in viewpoints represented, that they do not meet in secret, and that their records and work product be made available for public inspection".[286] All four lawsuits were filed in the District of Columbia.

The first suit[d] was filed by Public Citizen, State Democracy Defenders Fund, and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) against Trump and the OMB. The Center for Biological Diversity next filed suit against the OMB.[e] National Security Counselors sued DOGE, OMB, OPM, and multiple Trump administration officials,[f] while a coalition of NGOs filed suit against OMB and DOGE.[g][286]

Public Citizen, *Lentini*, and *American Public Health Association* were all assigned to Biden-appointed judge Jia M. Cobb; the government has filed a motion to consolidate the cases.[287] *Center for Biological Diversity* has been assigned to Obama-appointed judge Beryl A. Howell.

Privacy lawsuits

The University of California Student Association filed a lawsuit[h] against acting secretary of education Denise Carter and the Department of Education (ED) on February 7 in the District of Columbia, claiming an "enormous and unprecedented" "intrusion into individuals' privacy".[288][289][290] The case has been assigned to Obama-appointed judge Randolph D. Moss.[291]

Three federal employee unions — the Alliance for Retired Americans, the AFGE, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) — filed a lawsuit against the Treasury Department,[i] alleging that Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent unlawfully granted DOGE access to sensitive data. The White House defended Musk's role, stating he had followed all federal laws.[293][294][295] On February 6, judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly, appointed by Clinton, agreed to a proposal filed by the Justice Department to temporarily limit DOGE to "read-only" access of Treasury data until a hearing for a preliminary injunction could be held on February 24. Department of Justice lawyers struggled to explain how DOGE plans to use sensitive taxpayer data.[296]

On February 11, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) filed its own lawsuit to prevent DOGE from accessing OPM's data.[297]

State attorneys general Treasury payments cases

On January 28, 2025, twenty-two state attorneys general filed suit[j] against Trump and the Treasury Department in the District of Rhode Island for a temporary retraining order (TRO) barring Trump from pausing any further federal aid.[298][299] On January 31, Judge John J. McConnell Jr., appointed by President Barack Obama, granted the TRO, effectively blocking Trump's federal aid freeze.[300][301] On February 10, finding that the Trump administration had failed to fully comply with the order, Judge McConnell directed the Trump administration to immediately end any federal funding pause and restore previously frozen funds until a final ruling was made on a permanent injunction to be heard at a later time.[302][303]

On February 7, nineteen state attorneys general, largely the same from the Rhode Island federal case, filed suit[k] against Trump and the Treasury Department in the Southern District of New York over DOGE's actions within the Bureau of the Fiscal Service (BFS).[304][305] In the early morning on February 8, Judge Paul A. Engelmayer, appointed by Obama, issued a preliminary injunction barring DOGE members from accessing Treasury data and ordering all existing unauthorized copies to be deleted immediately.[306] A hearing was set for February 14 before Biden-appointed judge Jeannette Vargas, who will preside over the case.[307][308][309] On February 11, Judge Vargas adjusted Judge Engelmayer's ruling by allowing Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and other senior department leaders whose roles require Senate confirmation to access Treasury data.[310]

The White House called the ruling "absurd and judicial overreach" and referred to Engelmayer as an "activist"; Musk posted similar sentiments on X and claimed Engelmayer was protecting scammers.[311] Conservative activist Charlie Kirk encouraged the Trump administration to defy the order should it become permanent.[311] That weekend, JD Vance posted on X that "judges aren't allowed to control the executive's legitimate power". Arkansas senator Tom Cotton called the judge an "outlaw".[312]

USAID firings and shutdown

A lawsuit[l] seeking to halt the shutdown of USAID was filed on February 6 in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia by the American Foreign Service Association and the AFGE.[314] The judge, Trump-appointed Carl J. Nichols, issued a temporary restraining order on February 7 against imminent plans for 2,200 employees to be placed on administrative leave and for overseas USAID workers to return to the US.[315] After a hearing, Judge Nichols extended the freeze through February 21, with another ruling expected before then.[316]

Protests

On February 3, protesters gathered outside the Office of Personnel Management and indicated that they would continue to protest for the rest of the week in opposition to DOGE and Musk. The protestors claimed that Musk had illegally taken control of the government's infrastructure,[317] and raised concerns that Musk was an unelected foreign national who was potentially stealing sensitive information stored in federal servers.[318]

A rally was organized in front of the Treasury department the next day on February 4 via word of mouth and social media, with initially 50 participants that grew into hundreds. Participants included federal workers, retirees and others who were alarmed and angry over Musk and DOGE's actions and its trajectory, chanting "Elon Musk has to go" and signs stating "No Trump, No Musk, No Fascist USA" and "Musk owns Trump". Democratic politicians such as Senator Chuck Schumer, Senator Chris Van Hollen, and Representative Maxine Waters spoke out at the protest.[319][320]

Protestors appeared at Tesla showrooms in numerous cities in the US in February. One of the larger was outside Tesla's Manhattan showroom, where protestors could be heard chanting "Elon Musk can go to Mars; we don't need your Nazi cars" referring to the Elon Musk salute controversy and Musk's support for Alternative for Germany. Protests also took place in San Francisco, Berkeley, Minneapolis, and Kansas City among others. Musician Sheryl Crow posted to social media a video showing a flatbed truck removing a Tesla she had sold in protest.[321]

Anti-Musk protest at the Berkeley, California Tesla showroom

See also

- 2025 U.S. federal mass layoff
- Business plot
- Project 2025
- United States Senate Committee on Appropriations – Standing committee of the United States Senate
- United States House Committee on Appropriations – Standing committee of the United States House of Representatives

Other similar commissions

- United States Bureau of Efficiency – US government bureau from 1916 to 1933
- Brownlow Committee (1937)
- Hoover Commission (two commissions, in 1947–1949 and 1953–1955)
- Project on National Security Reform, (2006–2012)

Notes

1. Pronounced //doʊdʒ//, *DOHJ*

a. /kəˈmɛk/
b. *Jane Does 1-2 v. Office of Personnel Management*, No. 1:25-cv-00234 (D.D.C. January 27, 2025)
c. *New York et al. v. Scott Bessent et al.*, No. 25-313 (D.D.C. February 3, 2025)
d. *Public Citizen v. Trump*, No. 25-cv-164 (D.D.C. January 20, 2025)
e. *Center for Biological Diversity v. Office of Management and Budget*, No. 25-165 (D.D.C. January 20, 2025)
f. *Lentini v. Dept. of Government Efficiency*, No. 1:25-cv-00166 (D.D.C. January 20, 2025)
g. *Amer. Public Health Ass'n v. Office of Management and Budget*, No. 25-cv-167 (D.D.C. January 20, 2025)
h. *Univ. of California Student Ass'n v. Carter*, No. 1:25-cv-00354 (D.D.C. February 7, 2025)
i. *Alliance for Retired Americans v. Bessent*, No. 1:25-cv-00313 (D.D.C. February 3, 2025)[292]
j. *New York et al. v. Trump et al.*, No. 1:25-cv-00039 (D.R.I. January 28, 2025)
k. *New York et al. v. Trump et al.*, No. 25-CV-1144 (S.D.N.Y. February 7, 2025)
l. *American Foreign Service Ass'n v. Trump*, No. 1:25-cv-00352 (D.D.C. February 6, 2025)[313]

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- Official website (https://doge.gov)
- Official X page (https://x.com/doge)

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